from North Dakota named Julie Schultz. Julie Schultz is a friend of mine, a mother of three from Burlington, ND. She was going to a League of Cities meeting in Williston, ND, on a quiet North Dakota highway on an afternoon with very little traffic and stopped at a rest stop. At this rest stop Julie Schultz, mother of three, encountered a man named Gary Wayne Puckett, who should have been in prison but was released early in the State of Washington. This issue knows no State boundaries. He assaulted Julie Schultz and then slit her throat and left her for dead.

I won't describe the events that allowed her to survive, but they were quite miraculous. But Gary Wayne Puckett should never have been near a rest stop on a highway in North Dakota on that day. He was released early.

Again, we know better than that. State governments should know better than that. Public policy should know better than that. We can do better than that.

It is my intention to reintroduce in the coming Congress, in January in the coming Congress, legislation that I have introduced previously. That is legislation that would provide financial penalties in the truth-in-sentencing grants that are given from the Federal Government to the State government, for those States that fail to enact laws that eliminate good-time credits, eliminate the dangling of time off for good behavior. My legislation will use these funds to provide financial incentives for states that say, instead, by statute: If you are convicted of a violent crime, understand your address will be your jail cell until the end of your term.

When and if we do that in this country, finally, innocent people walking up and down the streets of America will not be threatened by a violent murderer, a kidnaper, a killer, a rapist, someone who is let out early, and poses a severe threat to innocent citizens like Christopher Lee Ausherman.

Mr. President, my understanding is the Senate is now in morning business but there will be additional debate on bankruptcy; is that correct?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. At the conclusion of the Senator's remarks, Senator GRASSLEY will be recognized to speak on the bankruptcy bill.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, as soon as Senator GRASSLEY comes to the floor, I will be happy to relinquish the floor. I want to speak for 2 minutes on another subject. As soon as he comes, I will suspend.

THE ECONOMY

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I worry very much that we are facing a slowdown in our economy that could be very significant. I hope Mr. Greenspan and the Federal Reserve Board in December will decide they should begin to cut interest rates. Six increases in interest rates since June 1999 have clearly slowed growth in this country in a way, in some respects, that put us in a perilous position, with the liquidity crisis and a range of other issues that could very well derail the longest and strongest period of economic growth in American history.

I will speak more about this later because I see Senator GRASSLEY is about ready to speak on bankruptcy. I do want to say this. I have come to the floor previously when the Federal Reserve Board was searching for evidence of inflation—searching in closets, under beds, in virtually every crevice, trying to find some evidence of inflation, and used that fear to increase interest rates six times. We have had the highest real interest rates for many years in this country, and they threaten, in my judgment, to derail this economic growth.

I hope the Fed in December will think seriously about beginning to reduce interest rates to preserve an opportunity for continued growth.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

MAJORITY COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, pursuant to S. Res. 354, on behalf of the leader, I submit the following two Republican Senators to be members of standing committees of the Senate. The appointments that will be made are Senator NICKLES to be a member of the Banking Committee and Senator VOINOVICH to be a member of the Agriculture Committee.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The appointments will be made.

BANKRUPTCY REFORM ACT OF 2000—CONFERENCE REPORT—Continued

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the previous debate time with respect to the bankruptcy bill begin at 1:45 p.m. on Thursday, with a vote then to occur on passage at 3:45 p.m.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, I rise today to speak yet again on the topic of bankruptcy reform. Yesterday, we invoked cloture on the Bankruptcy Reform Conference Report with 67 votes. That's a solid bipartisan level of support. We have a conference report where both the majority leader and the minority leader voted to cut off debate. At long last, Congress is on the verge of enacting fundamental bankruptcy reform. Earlier this year, the Senate passed bankruptcy reform by an overwhelming vote of 83–14. Almost all Republicans voted for the bill and about one-half of the Democrats voted for it as well. Despite this, a tiny minority of Senators used unfair tactics to prevent us from going to conference with the House of Representatives in the usual way. So, we put the bankruptcy bill into another conference report. The important thing about this conference committee—which I have said before but want to reiterate now—is that the committee was evenly divided between three Democrats and three Republicans. There was no Republican majority on the conference committee. We would not be here if not for support from Democrats on the conference committee. So all of these objections to the effect that Republicans used some procedural trick to avoid dealing with the minority is simply and flat out false.

As I am speaking, the House passed the bankruptcy conference report by a voice vote. We are almost there. And with the level of bipartisan support demonstrated in yesterday's vote, I am confident we'll send the best bill we can to the President.

As I have stated before on the Senate floor on numerous occasions, every bankruptcy filed in America creates upward pressure on interest rates and prices for goods and services. The more bankruptcies filed, the greater the upward pressure. I know that some of our more liberal colleagues are trying to stir up opposition to bankruptcy reform by denying this point and saying that tightening bankruptcy laws only helps lenders be more profitable. This just is not true. Even the liberal Clinton administration's own Treasury Secretary Larry Summers indicated that bankruptcies tend to drive up interest rates, Mr. President, if you believe Secretary Summers, bankruptcies are everyone's problem. Regular hard-working Americans have to pay higher prices for goods and services as a result of bankruptcies. That's a compelling reason for us to enact bankruptcy reform during this Congress.

Of course, any bankruptcy reform bill must preserve a fresh start for people who have been overwhelmed by medical debts or sudden, unforeseen emergencies. That is why this conference agreement allows for the full, 100 percent deductibility of medical expenses. This is according to the nonpartisan, unbiased General Accounting Office. Bankruptcy reform must be fair, and the bicameral agreements on bankruptcy preserves fair access to bankruptcy for people truly in need.

These have been good times in our Nation. Thanks to the fiscal discipline initiated by Congress, and the hard work of the American people, we have a balanced budget and budget surplus. Unemployment is low and so is inflation. But in the midst of this incredible prosperity, about 1½ million Americans declared bankruptcy in 1998 alone. And in 1999, there were just under 1.4 million bankruptcy filings. To put this in some historical context, since 1990, the rate of personal bankruptcy filings has increased almost 100 percent.

Now we see signs of slowing in the economy. We see consumer confidence declining. We see the stock market losing value. We need to fix our bankruptcy system before a recession comes